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ABSTRACT

The movement from a teacher-centered to a student-centered classroom environment requires that teachers utilize facilitation skills for effective collaborative learning. Collaboration is the process of shared creation in which two or more individuals with complementary skills interact to create a shared understanding that did not previously exist. Primary facilitative functions include interventions to provide support for task completion, content acquisition, group processes or self-directed learning. Types of interventions involved in facilitation include those which focus on developing critical thinking skills, those that encourage member participation through the use of critical questioning, and those that encourage problem-solving and decision-making. The following facilitation skills can help cultivate collaboration in classrooms and within organizations: (1) refocusing on issues when necessary to keep discussions from bogging down; (2) validating and bridging topics to transition from one theme to another; (3) using the energy of the group to drive discussions; (4) inviting input and feedback; (5) setting a cooperative climate; (6) coaching to draw out what individuals already know; (7) active listening; and (8) proactively intervening in conflicts. Contains 12 references. (TGI)

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FROM TEACHING TO LEARNING, FROM MANAGING TO LEADING:

FACILITATION SKILLS TO BRIDGE THE GAP

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Karen Barr Biography

Karen Barr is a trainer with Northcentral Technical College's Center for Business and Industry.

She provides customized training including assessment, design, development, and delivery for business and industry within the ten county Northcentral Technical College District service area. Karen provides a variety of training which includes, team building, supervisory leadership, continuous quality improvement, and a number of related human resources development areas.

Karen's experience also includes consulting and facilitation in a number of areas such as strategic planning, group dynamics/processes, organizational changes/design, and training program planning.

Her business experience includes manufacturing management, administrative/training management position, and small business management. She was a corporate trainer for programs in interpersonal, supervisory, and leadership training with a Fortune 100 company.

Karen holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Colorado in business/marketing, and MBA from the University of Central Florida, and a master's degree in adult education from the University of Toronto.

Beth A. M. Dailey Biography

Beth Dailey is the Dean of the Lakeland Campus and Outreach Education for Nicolet Area Technical College. In addition, she is facilitating the development of a regional telecommunications network connecting the college with eighteen secondary educational organizations.

Beth's experience also includes consulting and facilitation in the areas of team building, facilitation, continuous quality improvement, and leadership development.

Beth holds a bachelor's degree in allied health teacher education from Ferris State University and a master's degree in Educational Administration from Northern Michigan University. She is currently a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin - Madison.

> *" To paraphrase Einstein, imagination is more important than knowledge. If we teach with the sole idea of imparting knowledge then the learner is limited to our level of knowledge. If we enable imagination in the learner, then the learner can exceed our limits as a teacher. If we manage with the sole idea of controlling and directing the worker, then the worker is limited to our level of expertise. A challenge for organizations is whether they can be lead toward learning so that individuals, work teams, and the organization as a whole, can work in a fashion characterized by imagination; seeking performance beyond current limits of those who manage the organization.*(Woolner, 1991)

Facilitation skills will be used by the transformational leader to cultivate collaboration when working with individuals and with groups of learners/employees. These concepts will assist groups of people with different skills in the creation of innovative solutions and products. For example: teachers and administrators from different technical colleges exploring the concept of shared programming using distance education or administrators and teachers from a community college collaborating with an employment agency, high school counselors and employers to plan career presentations for high school students. Facilitation skills will assist students as they collaborate on projects with students within their own classroom from different schools and different countries. Coaching, inviting feedback, validating and bridging and conflict interventions are some of the facilitation tools essential to the transformational leader.

Collaboration

Collaboration takes the word communication back to it's roots. The Latin verb *communicare* means "to share." Michael Schrage defines collaboration in his book No More Teams! Mastering the Dynamics of Creative Collaboration. He describes collaboration as **" the process of SHARED CREATION: two or more individuals with complimentary skills interacting to create a shared understanding that none had previously possessed or could have come to on their own."** Michael Schrage describes the true medium of collaboration as other people. People who realize that they can't do it all themselves. They need the insights, comments, questions, and ideas from others. That other perspectives can add value to their own.

Collaboration is NOT treating people like jigsaw puzzles to be fit together in a grand vision and it is NOT teamwork. The key is not the individual talents of the group but the ability to integrate them. Creating something you don't know involves getting people's minds to interact as components of a larger mind - "a communal brain." Another key to collaboration is candor. The ability to attack ideas and to dissect them without having to deal with hurt feelings; in other words, depersonalized argumentation.

Covey (1995) states that "one of the paradigms of traditional 3rd generation time management is on the concept of independent achievement....When we see the true interdependent nature of most things we seek to accomplish, the true measure in improving our effectiveness is in creating **conditions** that develop

and empower the unique strengths abilities and endowments of the people with whom we share common purposes."

We can draw parallels between the changes in instructional theory and the changes in leadership theory. Research into adult learning by Stephen Brookfield, Malcolm Knowles and others challenge the assumptions that adults learn effectively when directed and lead by the teacher. The new leadership theories suggest that people in organizations perform more effectively when nurtured in an environment that promotes collaboration, respect and is founded in shared principles and values, versus one in which employees are directed and controlled in order to complete job tasks. These theories of adult learning and leadership suggest that what is needed in both the academic and administrative environments are facilitators - those individuals who are "not a judge, teacher or even a (task) leader, but an instrument to help people discover themselves" (Kaeter, 1995)

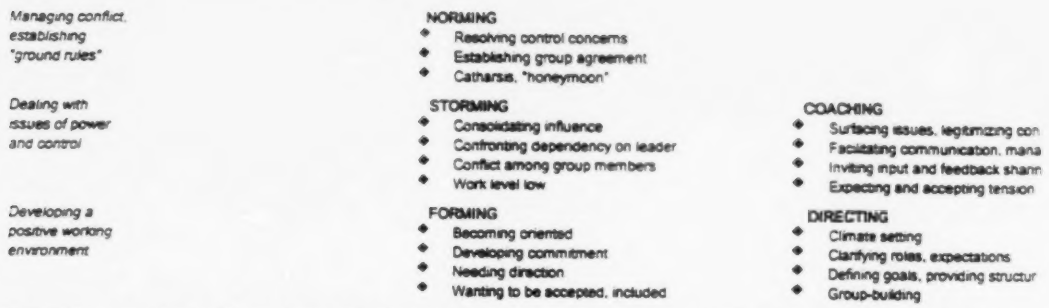
Facilitation

Primary facilitatative functions include making interventions that help in task completion/content acquisition and group process/self - directed learning. Interventions are generally focused on process not content. Some types of interventions include:

- Interventions that cause indviduals/teams/learners to examine processes and improve performance, focused on developing critical thinking skills.
- Interventions that encourage member participation, mainly in the form of critical questioning aimed at promoting reflective practice.
- Interventions that encourage problem solving and decision making. (Darraugh, 1994)

All true facilitation of learning and work necessitates the importance of being in tune to the situation in which the learner/worker may be at any point in time and then facilitating for that situation. For instance, in leading anyone to new knowledge, insight or job task, the facilitator must accurately assess readiness and current competence in the content area. Only then can the facilitator make the appropriate intervention. Laiken (1993) relates the facilitator's interventions in relationship to Tuckman's 1977 model of group development:

	Phases of Group Development (needs of group members)	Role of the Facilitator
Terminating the group's work	**ADJOURNING** ◆ Creates apprehension, minor crisis ◆ Regression in maturity level ◆ Needing help in saying "good-bye"	**DELEGATING/ SEPARATING** ◆ Supporting, letting go ◆ Adjusting own leadership style ◆ Helping group deal with terminati
Functioning as an effective group	**PERFORMING** ◆ Working productively toward shared goals ◆ Problem solving and decision-making ◆ Open communication, trust, respect ◆ Dealing with conflict	**SUPPORTING** ◆ Offering own resources, ideas ◆ Sharing the leadership role ◆ Being available for one-to-one consultation/coaching ◆ Smoothing the interface between and the organization



Creating a shared understanding differs from merely exchanging information in tone, attitude and tools. Facilitation skills are tools that a transformational leader can use to help cultivate collaboration in the classroom and within the organization. These skills include: the ability to refocus on the issue, validating and bridging, using the energy of the group, inviting input and feedback, conflict interventions, climate setting, coaching and active listening.

Facilitative Skills

Ability to Refocus on the Issue: The leader/facilitator has the responsibility and function of removing obstacles to participation. If the group gets bogged down in specifics, move on to generalities. When the group gets stuck on generalities, move them to specifics. This can be done by asking open-ended questions, those beginning with:what, where, why, or how. These questions will prompt for more information. An example is: "We seem to be discussing details, what is the big picture issue that we are talking about?"

The group may also get stuck on an issue that does not relate directly to the objectives. If this happens, take a few minutes to record the key points of the issue on a flip chart or chalk board. Discussion on an issue can also lose focus due to different interpretations of the words used. Take the time to operationally define key words.

Validating and Bridging: The purpose of validating and bridging is to refocus the group on its objective or to move from one topic to the next. The leader could stop and summarize what has been said or ask someone else in the group to summarize. After summarizing, move on to the next question or activity. Do not allow people to begin discussing ground already covered unless the group insists on doing so. If it would be counterproductive for the group to move on then a process must be determined to allow the group to complete its work.

Bridging consists of first summarizing the previous work and then explaining to the group what is going to happen and how it relates to the previous activity and objectives. Another sort of bridge is a short break before the next activity. Bridging can take place during a discussion as well. Point out how one person's comment relates to another to provide a kind of "glue" holding together a lot of different points.

Using the Energy of the Group: The facilitator is faced with the challenge of giving everyone equal opportunity to participate, to be heard and to listen, regardless of differences. Dialogue and interaction among participants needs to be encouraged. Loud and fast talkers will not require you to ask many open-ended questions. The quiet and soft spoken may not contribute until you invite them by name to share their thoughts. Capitalize on differences among group members for the common good of the group and tap the group's reservoir of knowledge, experience and creativity.

Inviting Input and Feedback: Encourage the group to evaluate its own progress or development. Mirroring allows the leader to help the group monitor itself. For example, the leader may mention that the group is commenting only on the disadvantages of a particular alternative. Sort, organize and summarize group inputs or get the group to do so (content). Or the leader might observe that, whenever someone brings up a radically different viewpoint, the rest of the group ignores the person (process). The leader may also mirror a ground rule that the group is violating: "Even though we agreed to hear each other out, there is a lot of interrupting going on. How does this affect the group?" Another way to mirror is to ask the team members to comment on how the team/class is progressing.

Climate Setting: It is necessary to break down competition and focus on collaboration, "to create an atmosphere that honor the spirit of inquiry. People will take the route of safety. They won't experiment if they don't feel safe." (Kaeter 1995) Therefore, setting the right climate to facilitate collaboration is critical. Physical, psychological and social behaviors and actions that inhibit learning and participation must be removed. Beyond consideration of physical room and workstations arrangements, the psychological and social aspects are very important, since the facilitator has the most control over these. Some climate setting techniques include setting consensual ground rules, sharing expectations and encouraging social interactions outside of work.

Coaching: Facilitators need to provide both support and challenge for the learner/worker. Through careful questing and listening the facilitator draws out of the individual that which the person already knows. This is not manipulation but an activity aimed at developing critical thinking and problem solving techniques. One difficulty in coaching is the feeling that teachers/managers must provide answers and be all knowing. This can lead to a tendency of telling vs. questioning. Coaching is effectively used in supporting others' initiatives, challenging them in new assignments, and in destroying paradigms.

Active Listening: Although listening is the first communication skill we learn and the one which we rely on most often, very few people have had any training or education on active listening skills. This is a vital component of the facilitation skill of coaching. Facilitators must be skilled at listening with their eyes and emotions, as well as with their ears, as up to 90% of a speaker's intended

message is "sent" outside of the verbiage. Name feelings that you sense when speaking to a learner or worker. Practice paraphrasing messages and summarizing periodically throughout discussions to ensure that you are receiving the intended message in its entirety. Capitalize on thought speed: Constantly relate your thoughts to what the speaker is saying. Resist distractions such as answering the phone, intense note taking and visual distractions.

Conflict Interventions: Individual and group resolution of conflict is a challenging facilitation skill. It is the role of the facilitative leader to help individuals to acknowledge frustration and anger, surface and manage conflicts and resist trying to solve problems or encourage resolution of conflict prematurely. Knowing when to make interventions requires recognizing whether or not the conflict is functional. Conflict that exists due to differences in perspective and critical analysis of ideas and issues is healthy. It should be allowed to run its course. Conflict which is dysfunctional, such as attacking people, personalities, and creating barriers to reaching organizational or learning goals requires skillful intervention. Allowing all parties involved in the conflict to speak openly and ensuring that all listeners "hear" the conflicting views is the most critical intervention. Use of the previously mentioned ground rules helps to establish the climate for successful conflict interventions. Using negotiation (give and take) models or working toward a totally new solution requires the facilitator to model the problem solving skills which will allow individuals to resolve their own future conflicts.

Summary

The classroom the environment is changing from one of teacher-centered to student-centered. The task of the student goes beyond content learning to interpersonal, leadership, and group-membership skills. The teacher will need to use facilitation skills in function as the "guide on the side" in order for collaborative learning to take place.

In this age of complex problems, opportunities and environments, partnerships make sense. Many community college's today reference the need to establish partnerships in their strategic plans. Partnerships will be important for our survival. But do we understand the meaning of collaboration and do we have the facilitation skills to establish true collaborative relationships?

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